

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Reptilia, Squamata, Colubridae, *Urotheca fulviceps*: Distribution extension

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The genus *Urotheca* Bibron, 1843 includes nine species (Solórzano 2004) of diurnal terrestrial snakes with the following characters: cylindrical body; head slightly wider than neck; nasal scale variable, sometimes completely divided; loreal separated from the orbit by one or two preoculars (and frequently also by a subpreocular); pupil round; two pairs of elongated geneials; dorsal scales smooth, without apical pits, in 17 rows, without reduction; divided subcaudals and cloacal plate; tail very long (35 to 47% of total length in adults), thick and fragile, with facultative pseudoautotomy; and maxillary bones with 11 to 19 teeth plus two ungrooved post-diastemal teeth (Savage 2002; Solórzano 2004). *Urotheca* ranges from México through Central America to western Ecuador, eastern, northern and western Colombia, and northern Venezuela, in South America (Manzanilla et al. 1998; Savage 2002; Köhler 2003; Solórzano 2004).

Urotheca fulviceps ranges from Costa Rica in Central America to Colombia and Venezuela in northern South America, with a disjunct distribution in the lowlands of southwestern Costa Rica, central and eastern Panama, northern Colombia, western Ecuador, and northwestern Venezuela (Peters and Orejas-Miranda 1970; Myers 1974; Pérez-Santos and Moreno 1988; Manzanilla et al. 1998; Savage 2002; Köhler 2003; Solórzano 2004). The identity of the records from the Magdalena basin in central Colombia mentioned by Dunn (1944) were considered questionable by Myers (1974), because some of the localities are at suspiciously high elevations

(800 to 2003 m), given that *U. fulviceps* is considered a lowland species, occurring from the sea level to 700 m of elevation (Myers 1974; Manzanilla et al. 1998).

Urotheca fulviceps was recorded for the first time in Venezuela based on a single specimen from Las Lajas River, Palmar River basin, 700 m above sea level, *Sierra de Perijá*, state of Zulia (Manzanilla et al. 1998). We present herein a new record for the species in Venezuela, collected during a field herpetological survey carried out near Los Ángeles del Tokuko village, in the Tukuko River basin, western slope of *Sierra de Perijá*, Machiques de Perijá county, Zulia state, northwestern Venezuela (09°50'44" N, 72°48'18" W; 270 m) (Figure 1), on 24 November 2006. The specimen was found active at 13:00 h on the leaf litter, near a stream, in a riparian forest.

The specimen has 164 mm in snout-vent length, and 67 mm in tail length (incomplete); internasals, prefrontals and parietals paired; frontal single; prenasal, postnasal and loreal scales present; preoculars 1/1, plus a small sub-preocular; postoculars 2/2; temporals 1+2; supralabials 7(3-4)/8(4-5); infralabials 9(4-5)/9(4-5), first pair of infralabials in contact on the ventral midline; two pairs of enlarged geneials; infralabials 1-4 in contact with anterior geneials, infralabials 4-5 in contact with posterior geneials; 17-17-17 dorsal scale rows, smooth, apical pits absent; ventral scales 143; cloacal scute divided; subcaudals 68 (tail incomplete) divided.

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Figure 1. Distribution of *Urotheca fulviceps* in Venezuela. 1: Las Lajas River, Sierra de Perijá, state of Zulia (Manzanilla et al. 1998). 2: Los Ángeles del Tokuko village, Sierra de Perijá, state of Zulia (MHNLS 18539).



Figure 2. Juvenile of *Urotheca fulviceps* (MHNLS 18539) from Los Ángeles del Tokuko village, in the western slope of Sierra de Perijá, Venezuela.

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In life (Figure 2) this specimen had a reddish brown dark head, slightly lighter than the body; a nuchal collar pale orange just behind parietal scales and occupying two to two and half dorsal scales; blackish brown uniform dorsum with an ill-defined and broken longitudinal white stripe, on the first scale row on each side of the body, almost imperceptible on the tail. Supralabials and infralabials speckled intensely of black; ventral immaculate, with a triangular black dash on each extreme, given a serrated aspect to the borders of the white venter.

The pale nuchal collar is not present in adults of *U. fulviceps*, but considering that juveniles of this species are undescribed, Myers (1974) conceives that juveniles of this species eventually might have a pale collar across the nape (which disappears with age), rather than a uniform yellowish-brown head and nape, and might be confused with specimens of *U. decipiens*. Myers

(1974) also points out that the intensely speckled supralabials (either dark with a horizontal white line or nearly immaculate in *U. decipiens*) would distinguish young of *U. fulviceps*.

The lepidosis and chromatic characters agree with descriptions of *U. fulviceps* by Myers (1974), Savage (2002), and Solórzano (2004), and therefore allow us to corroborate the eventual occurrence of a collar around the nape in juveniles of this species, as suspected by Myers (1974).

This is the second record for the species in Venezuela. The nearest locality previously reported is Las Lajas River, Palmar River basin, *Sierra de Perijá*, state of Zulia, Venezuela, ca. 64 km NNE (Manzanilla et al. 1998). The voucher was deposited in the herpetological collection of the *Museo de Historia Natural La Salle*, Caracas, under number MHNLS 18539 (Collecting permit: Venezuelan *Ministerio del Ambiente* 01-03-03-3649).

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